

1996 LIVESTOCK REVIEW

SUMMARY - Colorado farmers and ranchers had 2 percent more cattle and calves on hand as of January 1, 1997 and 7 percent more sheep and lambs than they did one year earlier. The December 1, 1996 inventory of all hogs and pigs was 9 percent larger than a year earlier but the December 1, 1996 inventory of all chickens was down 1 percent. Colorado ranks 10th in the number of all cattle and calves, 4th in the number of all sheep and lambs, 17th in the number of all hogs and pigs, and 26th in the number of all chickens. The state also ranks as the 4th largest cattle feeder with marketings of more than two million head of fed cattle annually in each of the past 15 years. Colorado ranks 2nd in the number of market sheep and lambs and more than one million head of sheep and lambs have been slaughtered in the state in each of the last 17 years. This is the fifth year in a row that the annual hog slaughter has been above 40,000 head.

The state's dairy industry has been very stable for more than 20 years, with an annual average number of milk cows fluctuating between 70 and 84 thousand head. Disease and other problems within the bee industry dropped the number of bee colonies by one third from a year earlier to 30 thousand colonies for 1996. Production dropped 18 percent to 2.2 million pounds. The state's trout producers have sold more than \$2 million of fish of various sizes each year since estimates were begun in 1989.

The total inventory value of the cattle, sheep, hogs, and chickens on hand at the beginning of the year (using the January 1 and December 1 reference dates) was \$1.93 billion, up 13 percent from the comparable value of \$1.71 billion one year earlier. Inventories were larger than a year for each species except chickens, and the value per head was higher than the previous year for each species.

Pasture and range feed conditions were rated mostly fair to good during the month of April 1996. However, mostly dry conditions during the month resulted in generally lower pasture and range feed conditions by early May. Condition remained mostly fair to poor through most of the month. Beneficial moisture late in the month improved conditions to mostly good to fair by early June. Continued dry conditions across the southern portions of the state were offset by improved moisture supplies in other areas during June so that overall pasture and range feed conditions remained mostly good to fair as of July 1. Frequent thunderstorms, especially across eastern areas of the state, helped maintain range feed condition during August and through September. This moisture also helped maintain pasture and range feed conditions in the mostly good to fair categories into October which was mostly on the dry side. Higher elevation areas received snow cover in early October, bringing an end to the 1996 grazing season in those areas.

CATTLE AND CALVES - The January 1, 1997 inventory of all cattle and calves increased 2 percent from a year earlier to 3.15 million head. The number of cattle and calves in feedlots being fed for the slaughter market increased 6 percent to 1.13 million head and accounted for 36 percent of the state's total inventory. During 1996, there were 285 feedlots of all sizes in operation in Colorado. Those feedlots marketed 2.32 million head of fed cattle for the slaughter market compared with 2.46 million marketed from 290 lots in 1995. The 18 largest feedlots marketed 69 percent of the annual total in 1996. The number of beef cows, at 826,000 head, declined 12,000 head from the previous year while the number of milk cows increased 2,000 head from 1996 to 84,000 head on hand at the beginning of 1997.

There were 910,000 heifers 500 pounds and over on hand at the beginning of 1997, unchanged from the previous year. Of that total, 155,000 were being kept for beef cow replacement (down 3 percent from last year) and 45,000 head were being kept for milk cow replacement (unchanged from 1996). The remaining 710,000 were other heifers (up 1 percent from the previous year) of which 490,000 were being fed for the slaughter market in feedlots with a capacity of 1,000 head or larger. The January 1, 1997 inventory also included 1,030,000 head of steers weighing 500 pounds or more (up 6 percent from the previous year) of which 605,000 were in feedlots with a capacity of 1,000 head or larger. Of the 1,130,000 head of cattle on feed, 1,110,000 head were in feedlots with a capacity of 1,000 head or larger. The number of bulls weighing 500 pounds or more was unchanged from the previous year at 50,000 head. The number of calves (steers, heifers, and bulls weighing under 500 pounds), at 250,000 head, was also unchanged from the previous year. The 1996 calf crop in Colorado totaled 870,000 head, 1 percent larger than the 1995 crop of 860,000 head.

Milk production during 1996, at 1.63 billion pounds, was up 5 percent from the previous year to a new record high. The annual average number of milk cows on hand increased by 1,000 head to 84,000 thousand for 1996. Producers obtained a new record high average production of 19,440 pounds per cow in 1996.

The total inventory value of all cattle and calves in Colorado as of January 1, 1997 was estimated at just under \$1.80 billion, 11 percent higher than the \$1.61 billion inventory value for January 1, 1996. The average value of \$570 per head represented an increase of \$50 per head from the previous year. The number of operations with cattle at any time during 1996, at 12,500, was down 500 from the previous year. The number of beef cow operations declined 500 from a year earlier to 9,500 and the number of milk cow operations declined 100 from 1995 to 900 for 1996.

SHEEP AND LAMBS - The January 1, 1997 inventory of all sheep and lambs in Colorado increased 7 percent from the previous year to 575,000 head. The classification of "Sheep on Feed" was broadened in 1996 to "Market Sheep and Lambs." This change will show not only the sheep and lambs in feedlots but also the number of sheep and lambs intended for shipment to market but not currently on feed. The stock sheep category was changed to "Total Breeding Sheep and Lambs." Sheep inventory estimates prior to 1996 did not include new crop lambs. Beginning with the 1996 report, new crop lambs are included in the inventory.

The total breeding sheep and lamb inventory as of January 1, 1997 was up 2 percent to 250,000 and the number of market sheep and lambs increased 12 percent to 325,000 head. The number of ewes one year old and older, at 210,000, was unchanged from January 1, 1996 and the number of rams one year old and older, at 7,000 head, was also unchanged. The number of replacement lambs less than one year of age increased 18 percent from a year earlier to 33,000 head. The 1996 lamb crop of 240,000 head was unchanged from the number born in 1995 but was 6 percent below the 255,000 head born in 1994.

On January 1, 1997, the 325,000 head of market sheep and lambs consisted of 3,000 sheep and 322,000 lambs. The 322,000 head of market lambs were estimated to be in the following weight groups: 4,000 head weighing less than 65 pounds, 43,000 head in the 65 through 84 pound category, 100,000 head in the 85 through 105 pound category, and 175,000 head weighing more than 105 pounds.

The January 1, 1997 inventory value of all sheep and lambs in Colorado was estimated at \$60.38 million, up 28 percent from a year earlier. The increased inventory value was bolstered by both the larger inventory and a higher value per head. The average value of \$105.00 per head was \$17.00 higher than the previous year. The number of operations in the state with sheep, at 1,300, held even with the previous year after several years of steady decline. During the 1980's, the number of operations for each year fluctuated between 2,200 and 2,600. Since 1988, the number of operations has dropped from 100 to 300 each year until 1996.

HOGS AND PIGS - The December 1, 1996 inventory of all hogs and pigs in Colorado was 630,000 head. This was a 9 percent increase over the December 1, 1995 level and the largest inventory number since 1944. Except for 1992 when the inventory was the same as the previous year, inventories have increased each year since 1987. The December 1, 1986 inventory number of 190,000 head of all hogs and pigs was the lowest since 1965 when 169,000 head were on hand as of December 1 of that year. The December 1, 1996 breeding hog inventory increased 13 percent from a year earlier to 135,000 head. The market hog inventory of 495,000

head increased 8 percent. The state's total pig crop for 1996, at 1,434,000, was up 28 percent from the 1995 pig crop of 1,124,000 head.

The number of sows farrowed during 1996 increased 22 percent from the previous year. Producers averaged nearly 8.6 pigs weaned per litter for the year.

The December 1, 1996 inventory value of all hogs and pigs was placed at \$63.0 million, 37 percent higher than a year earlier. The average value, at \$100.00 per head, increased \$21.00 per head from a year earlier. The number of operations with hogs during 1996 declined 300 from a year earlier to 1,100. As with numerous other states, the number of hogs and pigs are being concentrated in fewer, but larger, operations.

CHICKENS AND EGGS - The all chicken inventory in Colorado as of December 1, 1996 totaled 4.08 million birds, down just 1 percent from the 4.13 million on hand one year earlier. The total number of layers increased 7 percent to 3.34 million. Of that total, 1.81 million were one year old and older (up 23 percent) and 1.53 million were less than one year of age (down 6 percent). The total inventory also included 320,000 pullets 13 to 20 weeks of age, 280,000 pullets less than 13 weeks of age, and 137,000 other chickens. During the period from December 1, 1995 through November 30, 1996, the state's laying flocks produced 827 million eggs, up 3 percent from the 805 million eggs produced a year earlier.

The total inventory value of all chickens was \$8.57 million, up 9 percent from a year earlier as a 11 percent increase in the value per head more than offset the slightly smaller inventory. The average value per bird was \$2.10, up 20 cents from the December 1, 1995 average.

BEES AND HONEY - Honey production in Colorado during 1996 totaled 2.2 million pounds, down 18 percent from 1995. The number of colonies dropped one-third from the previous year to 30,000. The yield per colony increased from 60 pounds in 1995 to 74 pounds in 1996. The 1996 honey crop was valued at \$1.75 million compared with \$1.97 million for the 1995 crop. Producers received an average of 79 cents per pound for honey sold in 1996, up 6 cents from a year earlier. Producer stocks of honey on hand as of December 15, 1996 totaled 1.13 million pounds, 19 percent lower than a year earlier.

TROUT - There were 36 operations in Colorado during 1996 which had trout sales of \$2.42 million compared with 33 operations with sales of \$2.27 million in 1995. Producers marketed nearly 1.0 million pounds of food size, stocker, and fingerling fish during 1996 and received an average price of \$2.45 per pound. That compares with 1.04 million pounds sold in 1995 at an average price of \$2.17 per pound.